

Marine Realms Information Bank: A Distributed Geolibrary

<http://mrib.usgs.gov>

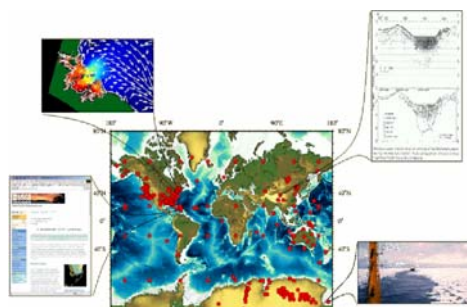
The Marine Realms Information Bank (MRIB) is a prototype web-based distributed geolibrary that organizes, indexes, and delivers online information about the oceanic and coastal environments. The significance of MRIB lies both in the utility of the information bank and in the implementation of the distributed geolibraries concept. Systems like MRIB can be applied widely as unifying portals for extensive or rapidly developing information bases, for which a centralized repository would be impractical.



The improvement of computer power and connectivity of the 1990s, by enabling very fast exchange of data online, has shown that effective information management does not automatically result from quicker connection or large broadband. To be really useful, information banks require both quality control and also classification systems that integrate and organize the information.

In 1999 the National Research Council proposed the concept of distributed geolibraries, which are online digital libraries able to provide a simple mechanism for searching and retrieving information in response to topical and geographically defined needs.

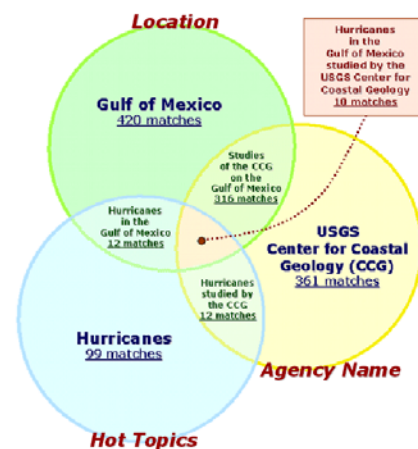
Distributed geolibraries could assume an authoritative role as subject gateways. To be referenced through a scientific geolibrary, information sources must meet quality standards set by the library gatekeeper.



MRIB outputs contain links to remote information.

The MRIB prototype is a distributed geolibrary for information about the coastal and marine environments. MRIB provides access to information, but it is not an information repository. It incorporates information that exists in remote sources, without modifying formats or content. This system succeeds by building a central index that contains metadata about the information sources, their geographical areas, and their network locations.

The ontology of MRIB is expressed in the classification system through which users can explore the available information. MRIB currently classifies information with 13 types of categories (facets): Location, Geologic Time, Features, Biota, Discipline, Scientific Method, Hot Topics, Project Name, Agency Name, Author, Class, Format, and Audience. Classification of information is performed by a librarian, which is both the major benefit and the major operating cost of MRIB.



Users can combine the multiple criteria of the MRIB catalog to find exactly the information they need.

MRIB can be found on the Internet at: <http://mrib.usgs.gov>

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